

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF ALACHUA COUNTY, FLORIDA
APPROVED MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING
August 15, 2000

The School Board of Alachua County, Florida, met in regular session duly called at 7 p.m. in the Boardroom, 620 East University Avenue, Gainesville, Florida. Present were: Barbara Sharpe, chairman; Judy Brashear, vice-chairman; Bill Cake, Bev Carroll, and Chester Leathers, members; Lawrence L. Marazza, superintendent; and James F. Lang, attorney for the Board.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Sharpe, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

APPROVAL OF
MINUTES

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Mr. Cake

Moved to approve the minutes of August 1, 2000, and Special Board meetings of July 24, and August 1, 2000, as presented.

The question was called.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion by Mr. Cake

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved to adopt the agenda for the meeting of August 15, 2000, as presented.

Delete Minutes of Special Board Meeting of May 2, 2000. Under A. 6., Scheduled Agencies, change Learning for Life to item a. and add items b., Buchholz High School Boosters; and c., ACEA. Delete the first two names on Attachment B – Page 2, Personnel Changes.

The question was called on the agenda as amended.

Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBER
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mrs. Brashear made the following announcements:

- Thanked Ms. Faye Cake, assistant superintendent, Human Resources, and her staff for the report on the Teacher Induction Program.
- Will be requesting an action item at the next Board meeting to present a recommendation to the Board related to the King Food Store property located next to Williams Elementary School.
- Add City Youth Recreation Task Force to her community agencies list.

The Board extended condolences to the family and friends of Mrs. Emily P. Waldron, computer lab proctor, Alachua Juvenile Center; and Mrs. Clyde Louise Leynes Boyles, a former teacher at Archer Community and Stephen Foster Elementary schools.

Chairman Sharpe made the following announcements:

- Shared a letter from a commercial utility organization comprised of utility engineers and other professionals dedicated to saving organizations significant fiscal resources, with no out-of-pocket expenses. The organization is paid only if they find the organization savings and after the organization has actually realized those savings. She requested the Superintendent refer this information to the appropriate department head to determine if it would be beneficial to the district.
- Requested Ms. Ginger Childs, assistant superintendent, Instruction, assist in coordinating school visits by the director of Hearing Officer Programs, to discuss legal and financial responsibilities of parenthood.
- Requested staff respond to a request for information by a CREATE Council member.
- Informed the Board that Attorney Ken Sukhia will be assisting her in attempting to negotiate a severance package with Superintendent Marazza.
- Stated for the record that she anonymously received a roll of .33 cent stamps through truck mail and will turn them over to Superintendent's Office for the owner to claim.

LEARNING FOR LIFE

Mr. Chip Chadwell, district director, Learning for Life, presented a training video on the Learning for Life program, a character education program that helps teachers help students learn the skills they need to succeed in the classroom and in life. The program is designed to support schools and community-based organizations in their efforts to prepare youth to successfully handle the complexities of contemporary society and to enhance self-confidence, motivation, and self-esteem. Learning for Life also helps youth develop social and life skills, assists in character development, and helps youth formulate positive personal values. It prepares youth to make ethical decisions that will help them achieve to their full potential.

He provided the Board with a budget based on serving 5,000 students in the Alachua County school system. Should the Board enter a three-way partnership with the state legislature and the North Florida Council Learning for Life, it would require the Board contribute \$12,500 out of a \$56,800 budget. The state legislature has appropriated 1.5 million dollars to offer to school districts that adopt Learning for Life as their character education program. He informed the Board that there currently is a grant in the Superintendent's Office in the amount of \$38,000 to be applied for Learning for Life in the Alachua County School district. The North Florida Council also provides funding for this program. A three-year commitment is required in order to evaluate the results of the program. The program provides a nationwide

character education program developed by educators to supplement and enhance the core curriculum and Sunshine Standards, which is supported by the Florida Legislature with state funding. A staff member would be assigned to each participating school, training is provided for staff, the district would be provided with the results of the evaluation, and a three-way partnership will ensure the success of the program.

He stated that if the Board votes to adopt the Learning for Life program, the Board will be provided with a quality program for implementation in the 2000-2001 school year and teacher training can begin within five days.

Dr. Leathers expressed several concerns and stated that he does not necessarily endorse what the Legislature indicates the district needs in terms of the program. He feels the character education program is an integral part of the whole learning process, but feels the package is priced to buy at a cost of \$58,000. He had the impression that the district was already doing this type of character development program.

Chairman Sharpe understands that the district recently developed a character education program, but felt it may be worthwhile to research the feasibility of the Learning for Life program. She requested Ms. Childs provide the Board with a report on this program in conjunction with the district's Character Education program and the feasibility of forming a partnership.

**BUCHHOLZ HIGH
SCHOOL BOOSTERS**

Mr. Mike Kline, president, Buchholz High School Football Booster Club, updated the Board on the status of the stadium construction. He reported that construction of the stadium began in 1995 and approximately \$125,000 has been spent to date. He pointed out that the Boosters have had extensive parental and volunteer involvement, and have conducted fundraisers to fund the construction, but the Boosters are in need of the Board's assistance and requested a contribution of \$395,000 to complete the stadium.

Mrs. Carroll requested a printout of the monies spent at each high school for recreational and athletic facilities and also a report related to traffic, staff concerns, etc.

Mr. Kline provided the Board with a progress report on the stadium and noted that they have a new scoreboard, that the lights, surface, irrigation and goal posts have been completed, but the restrooms, concessions and seating capacity remain to be completed.

Mr. Terry Tougaw, assistant superintendent, Facilities/Transportation, stated that he is available to meet with Mr. Kline and a committee, including a Board member, to discuss the future of Buchholz High School. He was not aware the Board was considering developing a

football stadium at Buchholz, but should that be the direction of the Board, he will work with the group to do so. He noted that there have been concerns from other high schools also wishing to have a stadium.

Mrs. Carroll stated that Buchholz has had less district monies applied to their athletic field and structures and the Board must be fair. At the capital outlay workshop she requested a plan be developed for all high schools stating where we would like to be in four-five years. She noted that the district has not done a good dollar inventory of what has been spent for each facility and there is a need for a discussion with all booster clubs, the facilities department and the Board.

Dr. Leathers stated that there is a need to have a vision and his goal is to eventually have three stadiums for each of the city schools. He felt there was a need to expand with the city and county and develop a more effective plan for recognizing the potential in what booster clubs contribute, but at the same time not penalizing a school that has extensive support.

Chairman Sharpe stated that there is a need to consider some schools that may not have the potential to raise money and that will always be at the end of the line. The Board needs to plan carefully on how to help all schools since all booster clubs are not created equal.

ACEA

Mr. Gunnar Paulson, president, ACEA, introduced several members and presented the following critical issues for Board consideration:

- Urged the Board to treat employees fairly and increase salaries as the Board's top priority
- Class size reduction
- Discontinue privatization in the district
- Bargain money first and language second

Mrs. Brashear requested staff clarify for the Board whether or not refraining from air conditioning a school or lighting a field would make more money available for salaries.

Dr. Mary Chambers, assistant superintendent, Business Services, pointed out that capital outlay dollars cannot be used to give salary raises.

RECOGNITION—
PROJECT GRADUATION
APPRECIATION AWARD

Ms. Joyce Daniels, director, Student Support Services, reported that the Corner Drug Store, along with other community agencies, sponsored the annual Project Graduation event, which was held June 3, 2000, at the O'Connell Center. A total of 1,183 students participated in the event. A representative from the Corner Drug Store presented the Board with a token of appreciation for their participation.

The Board thanked Corner Drug Store and everyone involved in this

worthwhile effort.

CITIZEN INPUT

Chairman Sharpe introduced Court Reporter Dawn Strickland.

The following suggestions/recommendations were presented to the Board for consideration:

- A parent of Chance Charter School urged the Board to reconsider opening the school and allowing the parents and the staff of the school to get the finances under control.
- Ms. Jackie Garrett, executive director, Chance Charter School, shared a copy of the proposed budget for the upcoming school year and explained how Chance Charter is meeting the Board of Education's recommendations. She informed the Board of the following efforts currently being undertaken at Chance:
 - The school's governing Board has begun a fundraising effort to abolish the current debt and build a base for teacher viability.
 - Proposal letters from several corporations and parent pledges have been received--\$10,000 savings.
 - She will forego her salary until the deficit is negated--\$45,000 per year savings.
 - Two staff members have agreed to work without pay for the month of August---\$3,800 savings.
 - Staff members have donated, or forgiven, their unreimbursed time off--\$9,488 savings.
(These efforts will bring the school's debt balance from \$114,399 to \$46,111.)
 - Chance has also paid several of the outstanding bills listed as end-of-year debt, including the July IRS payment of \$6,905.04, which will bring the debt down to \$39,205.
 - Money is also still owed from the Child Find reimbursements, but they have not been finalized at this time.
 - Chance has engaged the services of the Florida Charter School Services, Inc., with specific terms to be negotiated between Chance Charter School, the Alachua County School Board, the Department of Education and the Florida Charter School Services Company. Mr. Danny Wheelock, a retired district finance officer, is very cognizant of financial monitoring for districts and schools and will assist Chance.
 - Chance Charter School Project, Inc., agrees to provide twice monthly updates to the Charter Board and district staff concerning student performance issues, full financial disclosure showing additional funds raised, funding received and expenses incurred and paid.
 - Complete records for student IEPs and fiscal issues also will be shared.

- Chance staff will visit three other charter schools, which deal with ESE populations.
 - Chance will abide by and continue the corrective action plan enforced as a result of the Commissioner of Education's order.
 - Based on the results of the DOE investigation, no further IDEA funds are owed to the school at this time.
 - The request for complete disclosure was handled as quickly as possible.
 - Chance has operated without revenue or staff since the school closed on June 20, 2000.
 - Due to closure of the school by the school district on June 20, 2000, there is no current enrollment roster and parents have been urged to find appropriate placement for their children as soon as possible. Many parents have placed their children in private schools at a significant cost to the parent. Should the student not be able to function within the private school setting, they will potentially be returning to the traditional school setting.
 - Several principals have indicated the need for hiring additional teachers and aides due to the re-entry of Chance Charter School students into local schools.
- Ms. Garrett stated that the intensive monitoring requirements stipulated in the Cabinet Order, which is every two weeks, will maintain a level of security to the School Board and for the students of Chance Charter School. Any negative impact on the ability to meet the educational needs of the students, will be quickly and clearly evident. Many students have no placement options available to them should Chance close and it is not in the best interest of Chance Charter School students that the school be closed. She stated that several parents have indicated that they have retained attorneys, as they feel the rights of their children are already being denied. Parents are well aware of what service delivery is going to be offered to their students this year. She explained to the Board that closing the school may open the Board to litigation from individual parents and students.
- She recommended the Board renew the charter for one year with the stipulation that the financial picture be significantly improved at the end of that year. During the one year period, Chance could be closed if they do not comply with the recommendations made in the Cabinet Order.
- Mr. Phil Cervone, State Attorney's Office, provided the Board with a letter of support related to the proposed purchase of the King Food Store property located next to Williams Elementary School. He stated that the State Attorney's Office supports law enforcement efforts in that particular neighborhood with this store, but arrests

and prosecutions do not solve the problem because the facility continues to draw the same abuses and the cycle continues. He recommended the Board adopt a proposal as a solution for the children at Williams Elementary School and the neighborhood.

- Mr. Bill Boe, citizen, encouraged the Board to begin a dialogue with the University of Florida to allow the school district access to Florida Field for football practices and events.
- Ms. Chery Ferguson, employee, Chance Charter School, urged the Board to resolve the financial issues and allow the school to remain open.

Responding to an inquiry from Chairman Sharpe, Mr. Tom Wittmer, staff attorney, clarified that the suggestions presented by the State Board of Education are a recommendation, but the Board has limited discretion. Pursuant to the law, the School Board may fail to act in accordance with those recommendations only if it makes findings by competent, substantial evidence that following the recommendations of the State Board would be contrary to the law, or contrary to the best interests of the pupils or the community.

Responding to a question by Dr. Leathers, Mr. Wittmer reported that there was a recent case out of St. Lucie County where the District Court of Appeals affirmed the meaning of the statute and did uphold the closing of the charter school.

REPORT—
TECHNOLOGY LAB
UTILIZATION

Superintendent Marazza presented a usage report to the Board on the Mobile Instructional Technology Lab from January 1, 1998, to the present as requested by Chairman Sharpe at the last Board Meeting.

Chairman Sharpe felt it would be helpful for the Board to receive a location schedule of the mobile technology lab on a regular basis.

Ms. Ginger Childs, assistant superintendent, Instructional Curriculum, reported that the lab is scheduled to be moved to Howard Bishop Middle School and will stay there through the first semester due to their increased enrollment and technology magnet.

PRESENTATION—
UNITED WAY 2000
CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF

Ms. Childs presented the United Way 2000 Campaign Kick-off Video and outlined her goals for this year's campaign and urged all employees to make a contribution to this worthwhile organization.

CHANCE CHARTER
SCHOOL PROJECT, INC.

Ms. Childs reported that in March the Board voted to give notice to Chance Charter School that it intended to terminate the school's charter in June, based on the school's failure to maintain generally accepted standards of fiscal management. At that time the school was projected

to have a June 30 operating deficit. The school requested a hearing and the Board held an evidentiary hearing on May 2, 2000, to consider whether to terminate the charter contract. The Board decided after that hearing to terminate the charter effective June 20, 2000. The school then appealed that decision to the State Board of Education and the State Board heard the appeal on July 11. At the July 18, 2000, Board meeting the Board was informed that the State Board remanded the matter back to the School Board, recommending that the school's charter contract be renewed with six specific recommendations.

She reported that on July 12, 2000, staff made a written request to principal Jackie Garrett for complete disclosure of all outstanding financial obligations of the school. On August 3, 2000, Ms. Garrett provided a list of the school's accounts payable. The list shows amounts now due to various creditors totaling \$42,429. Ms. Garrett also included two estimated revenue worksheets for 65 and 75 students, and a list of projected expenditures for the 65-student level. The schedule of projected expenditures includes a designated fund balance of \$34,444. On August 8, 2000, Ms. Garrett also provided a list of 19 students who may enroll if the school is opened.

Dr. Mary Chambers, assistant superintendent, Business Services, and her staff provided the Board with a brief overview of updated financial information.

Ms. Childs reported that based on the information submitted by Chance Charter School and its accountants, it should be accepted by the Board as competent substantial evidence. The financial report indicates that the school has a substantial operating deficit. If the Board were to renew the school's charter contract, the school's general fund would begin the year with a negative balance of \$114,399. Consequently, the school's operating funds for 2000-20001 would be effectively reduced by this amount in order to transfer funds to capital outlay accounts and to pay current bills due from last year. If the district assumes that the school will achieve its projected enrollment of 65 students, the deficit would consume about 30% of the school's general fund no matter the enrollment. If there was low enrollment, it could even go to a greater proportionate burden for the school.

She stated that based on all the available data, the district concludes that renewing this school's charter contract would be contrary to the best interests of the pupils and for this reason Superintendent Marazza recommends that the Board not renew the charter contract.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll

Seconded by Dr. Leathers

Moved the superintendent's recommendation not to renew the charter

contract with Chance Charter School.

Ms. Garrett addressed the Board regarding the projected expenditure sheet used by staff to make the recommendation and noted that it is not the one that was a draft projection. The projection that Chance is actually using for next year was included in the four-pages that the Board was given earlier in the evening. Mr. Wheelock termed the designated fund balance, which means that those are monies that were not allocated for any other purpose and have increased from \$34,000 to \$111,000, and those were the changes she discussed earlier during Citizen Input.

Mrs. Brashear expressed concern with the conflicting figures from staff and Chance Charter.

Ms. Garrett responded that on page 1 or 2, the \$111,000 is money that is not allocated to pay for any service delivery at this point and she would term a "discretionary fund." Staff used the figure of \$34,000 on the original document. She noted that the money is made up of her giving up her salary for a year and the fund changes discussed earlier.

Mrs. Brashear stated she had requested Mr. Wheelock attend the Board meeting, but he was unable to come and inquired if he would have authority over Chance's figures.

Ms. Garrett stated that Mr. Wheelock informed her that he does not want to be responsible for writing the checks for the school, but based on the Cabinet recommendation, she would have to clear all expenditures through him.

Mrs. Brashear asked how Mr. Wheelock would have authority over the books and how he would be in charge over the revenue.

Ms. Garrett stated that part of the charter contract with the district and Mr. Wheelock would be to work with Mr. Wittmer and review the Cabinet recommendations and include them as part of the Charter Contract, specifically what the district would want him to be responsible for. She stated that Mr. Wheelock does not want to write the checks, but all expenditures would be cleared through him. As part of the Cabinet recommendation, Chance Charter would provide a financial report to district staff every two weeks.

Mrs. Brashear preferred Mr. Wheelock provide a written document or statement indicating that he will work with Chance and also provide background information to the Board related to his experience.

Ms. Garrett informed the Board that Mr. Wheelock has reviewed the

Cabinet recommendations and has agreed to work with Chance and he has also prepared their budget projections.

Mrs. Brashear stated that there is no guarantee Chance Charter will receive the pledges totaling \$10,000.

Responding to Mrs. Carroll's question, Ms. Garrett informed the Board that Chance has received an eviction summons, but will have money for rent if the contract is renewed. She also stated that if the Board does not renew the contract, Chance will file for bankruptcy as a non-profit corporation.

Dr. Leathers stated that he is not debating the quality of education provided by Chance, but the Board has the responsibility to be educationally and financially sound. He does not feel that it would be a sound business venture for the Board to renew the contract with Chance until he sees more evidence. He stated that he does not support the operation of Chance Charter School for another year.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

PUBLIC INPUT
REGARDING THE
STRATEGIC PLAN

Mrs. Brashear reported that she and Dr. Leathers met on August 2, 2000, to discuss the type of input the Board would like to receive on the strategic planning process. It was agreed that the Board did not want to change or open up the process. She stated that August 29, 7 p.m., was selected for a public hearing to allow citizens an opportunity to provide input to the Board on their concerns or suggestions.

Dr. Leathers stated that the strategic planning process was open and advertised and citizens had many opportunities to address the Board. The public hearing would be to clarify the process and answer any questions or concerns.

Responding to Chairman Sharpe, Mrs. Brashear stated that the public hearing would provide a forum to answer questions related to the strategic planning process and clear up any misunderstandings. It was felt an additional opportunity would be appropriate for everyone to have input.

Mrs. Carroll suggested inviting the 30-member planning team to attend the public hearing and have the Board priority charts available for display. She also felt it was important to give the community an opportunity to have closure.

Mr. Calk expressed his support for the public hearing and suggested sending invitations to every action team member, including the individuals that dropped out during the process. He informed the Board that he will be on vacation on August 29.

Mrs. Carroll suggested the invitations be sent as soon as possible.

Mrs. Brashear suggested Don Lewis act as facilitator and have available the written documents between the teams and informally walk through the process.

Mrs. Carroll suggested a representative from each action team be invited.

Motion by Mrs. Carroll Seconded by Mr. Cake

Moved to schedule a public hearing 7 p.m., August 29, 2000, to receive input from the public regarding the proposed amendment to the Strategic Plan which includes specific result statements for each of the nine strategies.

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Cake Seconded by Carroll

Moved to approve the consent agenda as described in items 1-4. (See Supplementary Minutes Book.)

The question was called. Upon Vote: Motion passed 5-0

BOARD MEMBERS/
SUPERINTENDENT
REQUESTS

Mrs. Carroll made the following requests:

- Schedule an Executive Session.
- A report on the status of the Education Business Alliance (EBA) and who decides how the money is to be used.

Chairman Sharpe requested a financial report of the EBA and how the money can be used. She noted that the Board has never been involved with the EBA because it has strictly been handled by the Superintendent.

Mrs. Brashear made the following requests:

- As the Board's NSBA Federal Network liaison, she received a Call to Action for additional IDEA funding and they have extended their deadline to allow additional time for signatures.
- Add an action item for the next Board meeting on the King Food Store property.
- Superintendent form a committee of teachers and administrators to set criteria for awarding money from the EBA to recognize teachers who have taken on additional leadership roles by funding their travel expenses to national and state conferences, meetings, competitions or professional positions.

Dr. Leathers requested clarification from Board Attorney Lang on the EBA as to whether the Board can legally recommend allocating funds to subsidize teacher travel. He suggested the Alachua County Education Association should also provide input into this proposal.

Superintendent Marazza reported that two or three meetings were held with the business and educational community to determine better delivery programs to students. He suggested the Board include these individuals in discussions related to disbursements.

Chairman Sharpe stated that the EBA was not legally established through the Board and the Board has no authority over the money. She requested further clarification on who legally has the authority to make recommendations for use of the money and if the superintendent was within legal guidelines to raise the money without going through the Board.

Dr. Leathers stated that there is still no viable vehicle available to accept or raise money for the school system with the exception of the Foundation.

Board attorney Lang updated the Board on the status of the Perry McGriff donation offer and reported that he conducted research with other board attorneys around the state and believes the Board cannot accept the money for the purpose Mr. McGriff specified, which was specifically for coaches at one school. Mr. McGriff was informed and has been urged to work with the Booster Club at Gainesville High School.

Mrs. Carroll requested a report on how the Board can utilize the EBA money and would like to have a vehicle or solution for individuals or organizations to donate money to the school system.

Mr. Roger Brower, citizen, addressed the Board regarding an email he sent to the Board requesting information related to the EBA and noted that he has received no response to his email, with the exception of Chairman Sharpe. He stated he will provide the Board with information at the next meeting of his request and supporting documentation.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:03 p.m.